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ABSTRACT

This speech highlights new ways to improve teacher quality. It was prepared following a national search for models of excellence that addressed the training needs of teachers at every stage of their careers. Section 1, "Missing the Mark in Recruiting New Teachers," discusses the need to prepare the next generation of teachers, since in the next 10 years, the country will need to recruit 2.2 million teachers (one-half to two-thirds of whom will be beginning teachers). Section 2, "What Is Wrong with the System?" explains that an outdated teacher training and support system cannot be allowed to frustrate the hopes and dreams of too many teachers. Section 3, "Creating a National Partnership," discusses the importance of national partnerships among K-12 leaders, higher education, and political leaders at all levels. Section 4, "Improving Recruitment," discusses ways to recruit teachers that will interest the next generation of teachers. Section 5, "Challenges to America's Higher Education Community," discusses five areas that colleges of education must address to improve teacher education. Section 6, "Challenges to State and Local School Districts," examines the role of state governments and local school districts in reshaping the teaching profession. Section 7, "Incentives for Veteran Teachers," discusses the importance of incentives to keep the good teachers already in the system and offer them the opportunity to keep on learning. (SM)

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The Challenge for America:
A High Quality Teacher in Every Classroom

Annual Back to School Address
by
U.S. Secretary of Education
Richard W. Riley

National Press Club, Washington, D.C.
September 15, 1998

At the beginning of every school year, I have the good fortune to come to the National Press Club to give my back to school address. I have been traveling from Georgia to the Pacific Northwest as part of our annual back to school push, and I can tell you that America's schools are overflowing with children. It is an exciting time for children and parents; but in too many cases our schools are overcrowded, wearing out and in desperate need of modernization.

As I noted in our annual report on the baby boom echo, released last week, we are once again breaking the national enrollment record. There are currently 52.7 million young people in school and more on the way. In the next 10 years we will need to recruit 2.2 million teachers to teach them.

Like many of you, I had the opportunity to see the movie, *Saving Private Ryan*. It is a wonderful movie that acknowledges the sacrifice of a generation of Americans who did their duty in World War II. Tom Hanks plays Captain Miller, an English teacher, who does what he has to do, even at the risk of his own life. I believe that the new patriots of our time will be those Americans, young and old, who go into teaching to educate this generation of children.

I believe that the education of our children should be this nation's number one national priority in this time of peace and prosperity. I also believe that this is the patriotic thing to do as well.

As I travel around the country, parents tell me again and again that they have very clear priorities about what we should be doing here in Washington. They want safe schools, our help in building new schools and modernizing old ones, smaller classes, and the assurance that there is a good teacher in every classroom. This is the nation's business and we need to get on with it.

If Congress is serious about getting dollars to the classrooms, I urge them to enact our legislation to modernize our schools and to reduce class size by hiring 100,000 new teachers. Rearranging existing programs—which seems to be the intent of the Congress— does nothing to address the real challenges facing schools today. In addition, Congress should fully fund the president's initiatives in the appropriations bill that they are now considering.

What must we do to prepare the next generation of teachers? I am releasing a report entitled *Promising Practices*. This publication, which highlights new ways that we can improve teacher quality, was developed following a national search for models of excellence that address the training needs at every stage of a teacher's career.

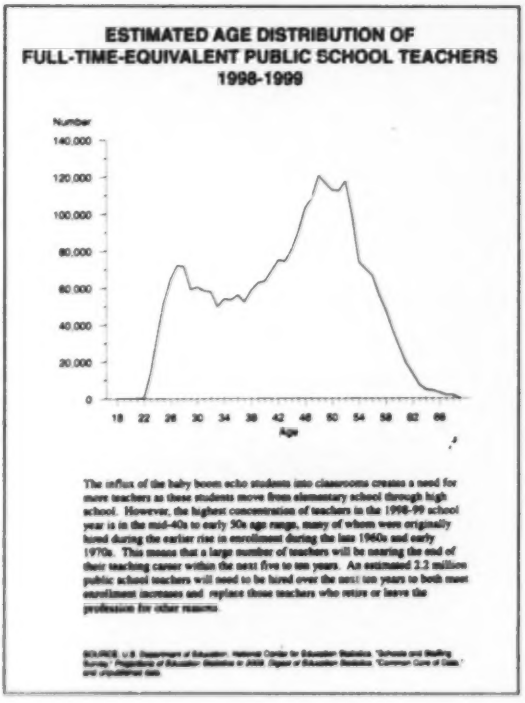
In preparing my remarks, I have had the good advice of three members of my staff—two former National Teachers of the Year, Terry Dozier and Mary Beth Blegen, as well as that of Paul Schwarz, the former principal of the nationally recognized high school Central Park East in New York City and our Principal-in-Residence. Like all good teachers, Terry, Mary Beth and Paul have clear opinions about how we can improve American education. In other words, they do not mince words. So I won't, either.

Missing the Mark in Recruiting New Teachers

I am concerned that we are missing the mark when it comes to preparing the next generation of teachers. We do not seem to recognize the magnitude of the task ahead. In the next ten years,

we need to recruit 2.2 million teachers. One half to two thirds of these teachers will be first-time teachers.

More than a million veteran teachers are on the verge of retiring. The chart below makes this point very vividly. By my reckoning, we are about five years away from a very dramatic change in our teaching force.


ESTIMATED AGE DISTRIBUTION OF
FULL-TIME-EQUIVALENT PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS
1998-1999
Number
140,000
120,000
100,000
80,000
60,000
40,000
20,000
0
18 22 26 30 34 38 42 46 50 54 58 62 66
Age
The influx of the baby boom echo students into classrooms creates a need for more teachers as these students move from elementary school through high school. However, the highest concentration of teachers in the 1998-99 school year is in the mid-40s to early 50s age range, many of whom were originally hired during the earlier rise in enrollment during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This means that a large number of teachers will be nearing the end of their teaching career within the next five to ten years. An estimated 2.2 million public school teachers will need to be hired over the next ten years to both meet enrollment increases and replace those teachers who retire or leave the profession for other reasons.

The vast majority of these experienced teachers who are about to retire are women. This, in fact, may be the last generation of women who went into teaching because there were limited opportunities in other fields. In 1998, women have many more career options—and that is a very good thing for our nation. These new opportunities for women will require us, then, to work much, much harder to recruit and train a new generation of teachers.

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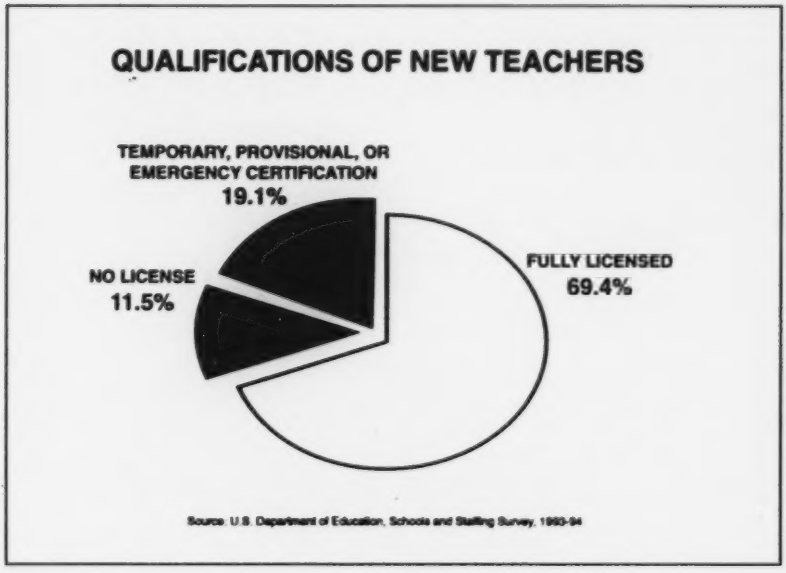
Many people ask me if we have a teacher shortage. My answer is yes. We face a shortage of high quality teachers. We are already seeing spot shortages developing in specific fields of expertise—math, science, special education and bilingual education. The recent news that New York City recruited math teachers from Austria highlights this growing problem.

School districts usually find a way to put somebody in front of every classroom. The problem is that too many school districts are sacrificing quality for quantity to meet the immediate demand of putting a warm body in front of a classroom. This is a mistake. Even now, too many school districts are issuing emergency licenses. The chart below illustrates my point.



Many of these emergency teachers are dedicated and want to do their best. But I have heard about and read too many horror stories about provisional teachers who are teaching by the seat of their pants with no preparation and no guidance.

The coming wave of retirements has enormous implications in our continuing effort to raise standards, to develop successful recruitment strategies, and to prepare new teachers. We also need to recognize that the teaching profession is dramatically changing. The use of computers, teaching in teams, and the recognition that children learn in many different ways are just three of the many factors reshaping this demanding profession.

Three other issues also require our attention:

- the increasing diversity of our classrooms and the lack of diversity of our teaching force;
- the increasing number of special education children and Limited English Proficient (LEP) children in the regular classroom and teachers who lack the training to teach them; and
- the need for many more incentives to keep veteran teachers up to date and in the classroom.

What Is Wrong with the System?

I believe we also need to take a hard look at the very structure of our current teacher training and support system and get on with the task of modernizing it as well. We cannot allow an outdated system to frustrate and even destroy the hopes and dreams of too many teachers.

The task is multi-dimensional. For example:

- too many teacher education programs are focused on theory and not enough on clinical experience;
- the current certification process is a cumbersome obstacle course that has little to do with excellence and much more to do with filling out paperwork; and
- once a new teacher enters the classroom we allow a perverse sink or swim approach to define the first years in teaching. New teachers are usually assigned the most

difficult classes in addition to all the extracurricular activities that no one else wants to supervise. Then we wonder why we lose 22 percent of new teachers in the first three years—and close to 50 percent in our urban areas.

This churning process and over-reliance on emergency teachers just doesn't cut it in my opinion. Imagine the outcry if a quarter of all new medical doctors left the profession after their first three years. I encourage local school districts to develop some type of long-term induction or mentoring program to help new teachers stay in the profession.

Creating a National Partnership

Education, as I have said many times before, is a state responsibility, a local function and a national priority. We cannot address the task at hand in a piecemeal fashion. We need a nationwide partnership among K-12 leaders, our higher education community, and political leaders at all levels.

A great deal of effort has gone into improving and supporting the teaching profession in the last decade. The National Commission on Teaching, led by North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt and Linda Darling Hammond, has provided an excellent road map to improve the teaching profession. This is all to the good. But now we need to make things happen and go to a new level of intensity.

I assure you that we will place a very strong emphasis on teacher quality when we ask the Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act next year. The bipartisan leaders of the Congressional education committee understand that need, and we will be working with them to shape that legislation.

Improving Recruitment

We can take other steps now to encourage more Americans to enter the teaching profession. The Clinton Administration strongly supports the Feinstein-Boxer Amendment to the Higher Education Act that will provide Pell Grants for a fifth year to those college students who want to become teachers and need another year to meet state requirements. This is particularly important to the state of California, which has the daunting task of recruiting 250,000 teachers in the next decade.

I am pleased that strong support is developing in the Congress for improvements in teacher education and standards. The Administration will continue to press the Congress to pass our proposal to recruit nearly 35,000 teachers over the next five years for underserved areas. As members meet today to advance this higher education legislation, I urge them to support our recruitment proposals.

This important piece of legislation will almost certainly include valuable new teacher loan forgiveness provisions that have been championed by Senator Kennedy.

I also urge Congress to fund the president's initiative to train new teachers in technology.

I support the creation of some type of national job bank to match teachers with districts with a growing shortage of quality teachers. There are wide regional variations in the need for teachers. We can do a lot to help connect teachers in different parts of the country with school districts in other regions that are facing growing shortages.

At the same time, the increasing mobility of Americans is going to require states and school districts to take a serious look at the portability of teacher credentials, their years in service, and pensions. We do not need artificial shortages developing because states have not brought their policies up to date.

Our federal efforts to enlist millions of Americans to go into teaching can have an impact. Our best hope, however, is the strong encouragement of parents and grandparents whose lives have been touched by good teachers. I get distressed when I hear stories about parents discouraging their children from going into teaching. To me, teaching is about serving your country and being patriotic.

I also challenge the myth that teaching is only for those who can't cut it in other professions. Anyone who has ever spent an hour in a classroom full of demanding second graders or had the challenge of motivating a group of teenagers knows how difficult the job can be.

America's teachers are some of the most idealistic and patriotic Americans in this country. I am extremely proud of them. So many of them have entered teaching because they want to change the world and many of them do.

What are our other challenges?

Challenges to America's Higher Education Community

I challenge the leaders of America's great colleges and universities to make teacher education a much higher day-to-day priority. Teaching teachers has to be a mission of the entire university.

Our nation's colleges of education can no longer be quiet backwaters that get a mere mention in the annual report to university trustees. College administrators who complain about the high cost of remedial classes would do well to pay more attention to how they prepare teachers. Several suggestions come to mind.

- First, colleges of education should give basic skills tests to students entering teacher education programs prior to their acceptance and at the same time hold themselves more

accountable for their graduates. This is why I endorse the thrust for accountability by Senator Bingaman and Representative George Miller.

- Second, stronger links must be developed between our colleges of arts and sciences and colleges of education. Future secondary school teachers should major in the subject they want to teach, and that type of course work takes place in the colleges of arts and sciences.

- Third, I urge teacher prep programs to put a much stronger focus on giving future teachers rigorous grounding in developing the skills they need to teach. It is harder than you think. Knowing your content is not enough. There is a skill and a craft to it all, and that is especially true when it comes to teaching reading. I believe that every teacher who is seeking a certificate in elementary education should have solid preparation in teaching reading.

One of the major aspects of the reading bill now before the Congress is strong support for increased professional development for reading. I support this effort and ask the Congress to pass this needed legislation. We will never raise standards if we just stay with the status quo when it comes to improving literacy.

- Fourth, colleges of education need to recognize that our special education and LEP populations are growing and deserve much more of their attention as they prepare teachers.

- Finally, I urge colleges and universities to develop much stronger links with local schools. The El Paso, Texas, school district featured in *Promising Practices* has dramatically improved its test scores by working hand-in-hand with the University of Texas in El Paso to improve teacher education.

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Challenges to State Government and Local School Districts

State governments and local school districts have a powerful role to play in reshaping the teaching profession.

I challenge every state to create a demanding but flexible certification process. Becoming a teacher should not be an endurance test that requires future teachers to overcome a bureaucratic maze of paperwork.

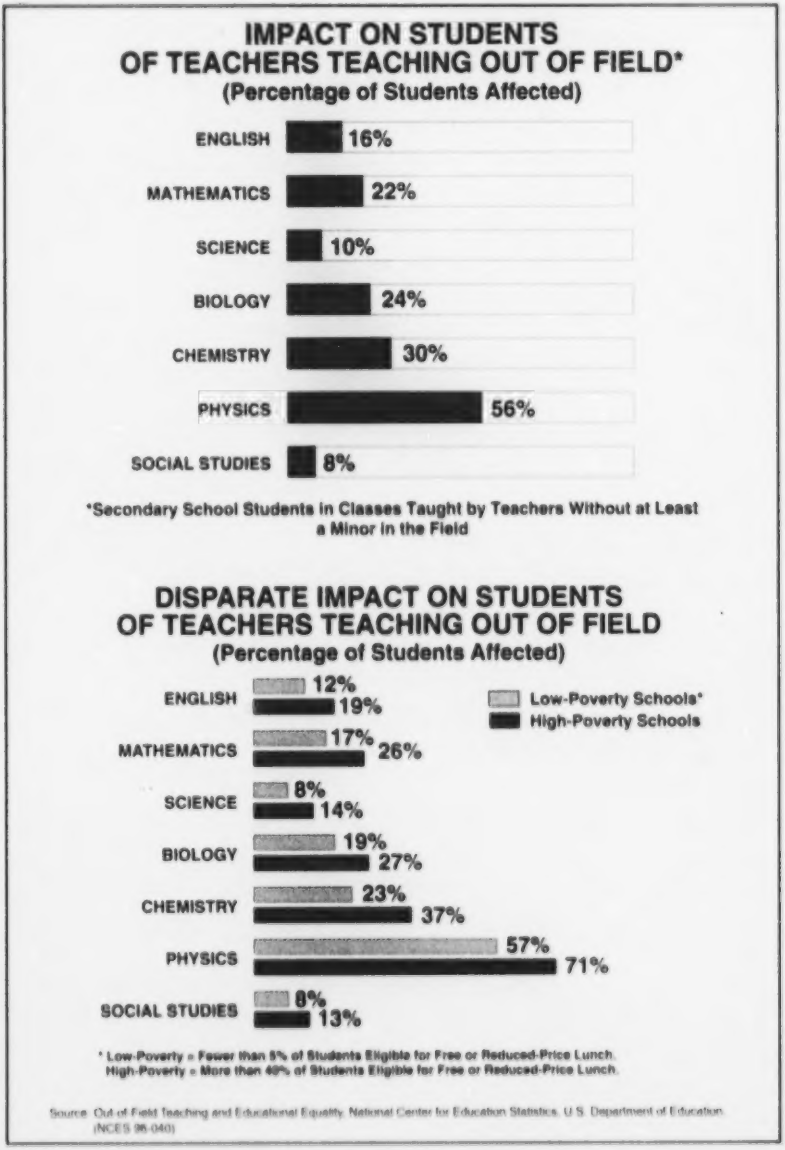
I believe a much stronger focus should be placed on assessing the knowledge and skills of future teachers, regardless of how they got them. Therefore, I support rigorous alternative pathways to teaching that can be so helpful in recruiting mid-career professionals from other fields to the teaching profession.

I challenge every state to eliminate the practice of granting emergency licenses within the next five years. You cannot set standards and then immediately discard them when the need for another warm body arises. New York State has taken the lead in doing away with emergency licenses and other states should follow this good example.

At the same time, we cannot challenge high poverty schools to raise their standards and then shortchange them by doing nothing to help them recruit excellent teachers. We are pushing the Congress to pass our strong teacher recruitment initiative. At the same time, our nation's urban areas have to do their part as well. Outdated hiring practices sometimes seem to be the reason that they are losing good candidates for teaching positions to suburban school districts.

State and local school districts must also end the practice of teaching out of field. I cannot even begin to tell you how baffled foreign education ministers are who visit me when I explain our unusual habit of allowing teachers to teach out of field. The following charts present the impact on students of teachers teaching out of

field. More than 30 percent of all chemistry teachers, for example, are now teaching out of field. I believe that every teacher, at a minimum, should have a minor in the subject that they teach.


IMPACT ON STUDENTS
OF TEACHERS TEACHING OUT OF FIELD*
(Percentage of Students Affected)
ENGLISH 16%
MATHEMATICS 22%
SCIENCE 10%
BIOLOGY 24%
CHEMISTRY 30%
PHYSICS 56%
SOCIAL STUDIES 8%
*Secondary School Students in Classes Taught by Teachers Without at Least a Minor in the Field
DISPARATE IMPACT ON STUDENTS
OF TEACHERS TEACHING OUT OF FIELD
(Percentage of Students Affected)
Low-Poverty Schools*
High-Poverty Schools
ENGLISH 12% 19%
MATHEMATICS 17% 26%
SCIENCE 8% 14%
BIOLOGY 19% 27%
CHEMISTRY 23% 37%
PHYSICS 57% 71%
SOCIAL STUDIES 8% 13%
* Low-Poverty = Fewer than 5% of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch.
High-Poverty = More than 40% of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch.
Source: Out-of-Field Teaching and Educational Equality, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (NCES 98-040)

Incentives for Veteran Teachers

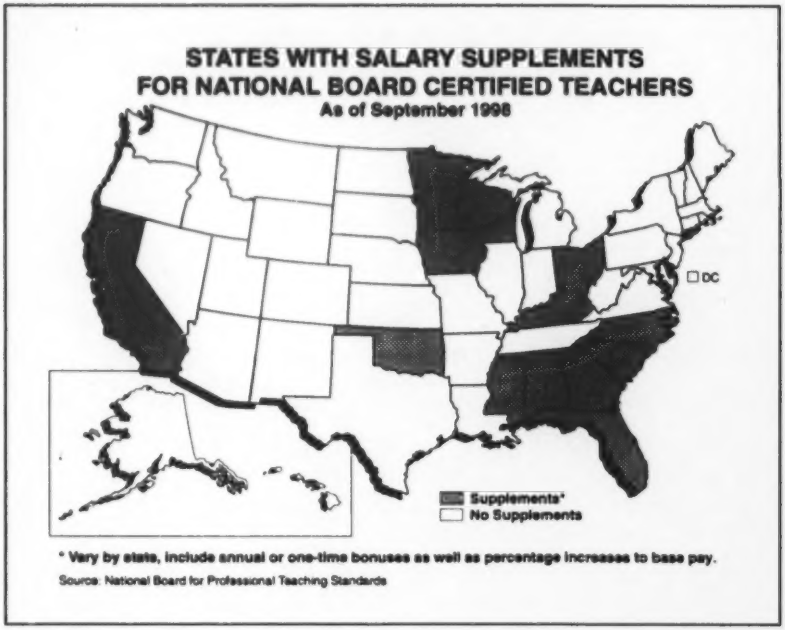
As we seek to raise standards for our students, we need to work much harder at giving veteran teachers the opportunity to keep on learning. Current professional development courses with their emphasis on workshops that put a premium on "seat time" really need to become a thing of the past.

We are developing more and more evidence that school districts that invest in quality professional development for their teachers see positive results in the classroom. The good work of Tony Alvarado in District 2 in New York City, who made sure learning new skills was an everyday experience for his teachers, is a wonderful national model.

We need other incentives as well. The current system of providing salary increases for credits earned seems flawed. There is often no connection between the credits earned by a teacher and what he or she actually teaches in the classroom. And, there is little incentive to encourage teachers to gain more knowledge or improve specific skills for their classrooms. Excellence, in a word, is not rewarded.

Only 14 states, for example, currently provide salary supplements to those teachers who set out to become master teachers through the National Board Certification process. The map on the next page identifies these states. As a result, many of the best teachers leave the classroom to get bigger paychecks as school administrators.

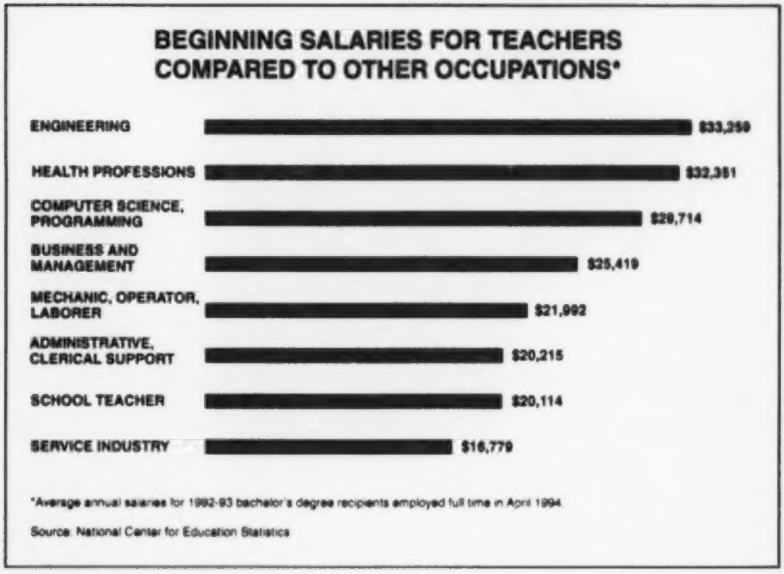
This is why I ask states and local school districts to take a good look at a new and developing concept called "knowledge and skill-based pay." Put simply, teachers are paid extra for new skills and knowledge they acquire. Teachers under this system get rewarded for specific skills and knowledge that help a school reach its own established goals.


STATES WITH SALARY SUPPLEMENTS
FOR NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS
As of September 1998
DC
Supplements*
No Supplements
* Vary by state, include annual or one-time bonuses as well as percentage increases to base pay.
Source: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

Now, let me say a word about teacher salaries. As I have said many times before, we cannot expect to get good teachers on the cheap. Mary Beth Blegen, the national teacher of the year in 1996, was being paid a $36,000 salary with 30 years of experience—a fraction of what she deserved—and what other professionals expect after years in service. The chart on the following page shows the beginning salaries for teachers compared to other occupations.

If we are going to entice more Americans to enter teaching, we need to offer them fair and competitive salaries. And, if we are going to ask teachers to meet new and demanding standards we also need to pay them for their effort.

Connecticut and North Carolina have had the good sense to raise standards for teachers and raise salaries at the same time. The results in the classroom are promising. I believe every state would be wise to follow their good example.



If we really want to recruit and retain good teachers we need to let them teach in first class school buildings. What kind of message do we send our children and our teachers when we ask them to go to a run down school building just a mile down the road from an immaculate prison? President Clinton has proposed a very strong school construction initiative. Congress needs to get off the dime and pass it.

In this speech, I have challenged many different groups to come forward and join a national partnership for excellence in teaching. It seems appropriate to end my remarks by taking a moment to talk to America's teachers. You are the heart and soul of the renaissance of American education. As I travel throughout the country, I have the opportunity to meet many of you. Each time I am struck by how important—and how difficult—your job is.

As teachers, you are being asked to know more and do more than ever before. Please continue your good work and go out of your

way to recruit new teachers. Let others know the joy you get from teaching. Help the struggling teacher to improve—and help to counsel out of the profession those who cannot. And make the effort to measure yourselves against the best.

I end now with a quotation from an old friend of mine from South Carolina, the writer Pat Conroy. This quotation is from his novel, *The Prince of Tides.* In this passage, Tom, a teacher who is the main character of the book, is asked why he chose to "sell himself short" when he was so talented and could have done anything in his life.

Tom's reply goes like this, "There's no word in the language that I revere more than 'teacher.' None. My heart sings," he says, "when a kid refers to me as his teacher and it always has. I've honored myself and the entire family of man by becoming a teacher."

With that, I thank all teachers on behalf of the American people. Thank you.

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